

Personalising Learning

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Context

In 2004, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, in partnership with Professor David Hargreaves, undertook a journey with English schools to explore what was meant by personalising learning and what it looked like in practice? This journey can be defined in three broad stages.

Developing the 'nine gateways' model

In summer 2004 Professor Hargreaves and 250 school leaders met to frame what might constitute personalising learning. This work resulted in the '9 gateways' model.

Personalising learning conferences

A series of conferences was held from autumn 2004, and in partnership with the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL). Each conference focussed on two gateways, with the exception of the final one, which focussed on the particularly challenging area of redesigning and reorganising schools to meet the challenges of personalising learning. Each conference was underpinned by the notion that progress in any gateway required sustained and distributed leadership.

This series ended in January 2005. Each conference led to the production of a pamphlet reflecting the key themes of the conference, and included case studies of interesting practice in the gateways covered.

Establishment of development and research networks.

These networks were created to research the first five gateways of the personalising learning agenda. A hub school was appointed for each of these five gateways in each of the 11 English regions. These hubs work to establish a network of schools around them, all working on the creation of next practice within Hargreaves' framework for innovation. This means that their work is based upon a disciplined, decentralised and distributed model.

The nine gateways

Nine gateways (see *fig. 1*) were devised as a means of building on and extending what many schools were already doing to personalise student learning. Professor Hargreaves produced six pamphlets exploring the gateways and showcasing the schools' work.

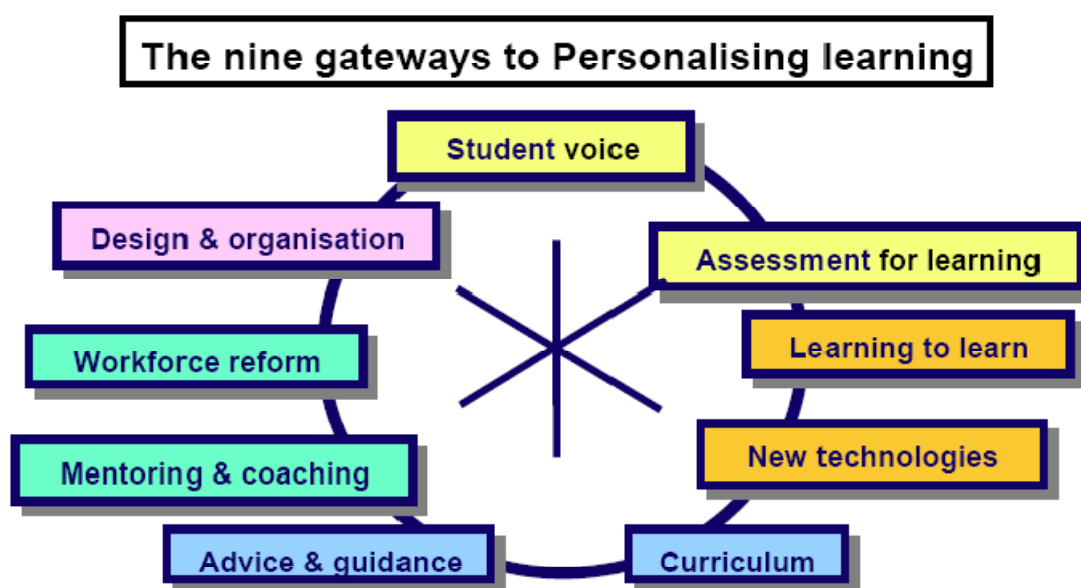


Figure 1: The nine gateways to personalising learning

There are many possible gateways into the process of personalising learning, so why these nine?

Each theme is applicable to every school and classroom: it is an aspect of teaching and learning that is inescapable, though some aspects are given greater emphasis than others in any particular school and classroom.

Each is already part of current professional practice in some form, however modest, but in some schools they are an area for pioneering innovation that is worth disseminating to others. Each requires strong leadership if progress is to be made, both distributed and from headteachers,

Each is potentially a way of enhancing student motivation and commitment to learning, which is an essential prerequisite to raising achievement.

No school is at the leading edge in every theme.

Full details of the nine gateways with school case studies may be found in the first series of Personalising Learning pamphlets:

- *Personalising learning 1: Next steps in working laterally*
- *Personalising learning 2: Student Voice and Assessment for learning*
- *Personalising learning 3: Learning to learn & the new technologies*
- *Personalising learning 4: Curriculum and advice & guidance*
- *Personalising learning 5: Mentoring & coaching, and workforce development*
- *Personalising learning 6: The final gateway: school design and organisation*

The pamphlets are written by Professor David Hargreaves and are available from www.ssat-inet.net/resources.aspx.

The 'Deepes'

As work progressed it became clear that the interactions and links between the gateways are far more complex than was previously imagined. This led to a reassessment of the gateways model, and the development of the 'Four Deepes' (see fig. 2)

Deep learning

The first 'deep' is **deep learning**. Most schools recognise that enabling students to perform well in exams is only a part of their wider educational purpose. Schools are increasingly seeking to support the development of their students as learners equipped for the 21st century world in which being a lifelong learner will be paramount. 'Deep learning' is best developed through the first three gateways of the personalising learning agenda: student voice, assessment for learning and learning to learn. The work of the D and R networks in these key gateways is to assess how next practice in these areas can facilitate deep learning.

Deep experience

The second 'deep' is **deep experience**. It is clear from our journey that student engagement is the key to better relationships between staff and students and is a prerequisite for the development of good learners who possess independence, responsibility, confidence and maturity. The answer to the question of how to engage students seems to lie in the gateways of curriculum and new technologies. The hub schools and their networks can sum up their work in these areas as discovering the best ways to engage students in a curriculum that is meaningful to them which makes the best possible use of the technology available.

Deep support

The next step in our journey is to create networks around the remaining areas of the personalising learning agenda. Schools feel that a new level of support is needed for students, staff and schools if personalising learning is to become a reality. The support required goes beyond that which has traditionally been provided by advice and guidance and mentoring and coaching. Both of these gateways have a role to play but '**deep support**' goes beyond this and requires us to re-assess the way we support people in our schools. It undoubtedly will involve working in federations and will draw extensively upon the new technologies.

Deep leadership

At the start of our journey we were very clear in our belief that leadership underpinned all of the gateways. However, the journey has revealed that a new type of leadership is needed if personalising learning is to be successfully resourced and implemented in a school. To this end the fourth network will focus on **deep leadership** of the sort that will enable transformation of schools.

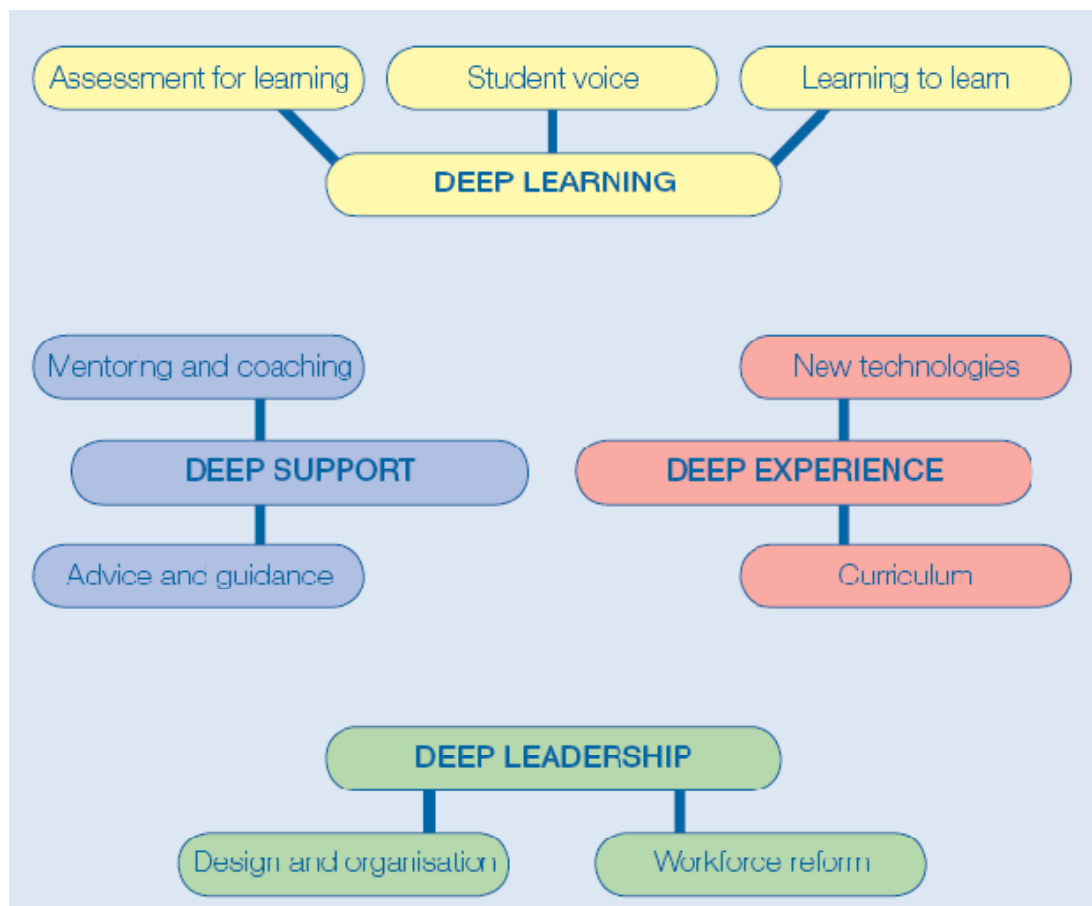


Figure 2: Relationship between the 'Deep's and the personalising learning gateways

Fuller explanations of the four deeps may be found in the second series of personalising learning pamphlets – *A new shape for schooling?*

- *A new shape for schooling?* - David Hargreaves
- *Deep learning 1* - Emma Sims
- *Deep Experience 1* - David Hargreaves
- *Deep Experience 2: Rethinking key stage 3* - Kai Vacher
- *Deep Support 1* - Sue Williamson
- *Deep Leadership 1* - David Hargreaves

Information about these publications, including a free download of the first chapters, is available from www.ssat-inet.net/resources.aspx. Information about these publications, including a free download of the first chapters, is available from www.ssat-inet.net/resources.aspx

System redesign

More recently, it has become clear that in order to provide a more personalised education service, one that creates young people who are higher achievers and much better learners, a transformation is needed. The architects of this re-design are school leaders, who are collaborating to produce an education system fit for the 21st century.

System redesign is about improving the architecture of schooling. Headteachers and their staff are the architects, for they stand between the politicians, who set the framework within which the architecture is designed and redesigned, and the students, whose needs must be met through such architectural design and redesign.

The importance of innovation

In his forthcoming publication, *System Redesign – 1: The road to transformation in education*, Professor David Hargreaves argues that innovation in schools is alive and well. Teachers are skilled in improvisation, as teaching is constantly modified to fit the needs and moods of every class and every student. To be a successful teacher, one has to learn to be flexible with one's professional practice.

In schools that strive for improvement, the headteacher turns this routine improvisation into more ambitious and systematic innovation. System redesign has to be built on such practice.

System redesign reconfigurations

The basic building blocks of system redesign are reconfigurations; elements of conventional schooling, or the relations between two or more such elements, that are first questioned and then configured in a new way to meet the challenges of 21st century schooling.

The reconfigurations fall into three groups:

(more information can be found on www.ssat-inet.net)

Institutional reconfigurations

1. From single to multiple institutions
2. Merging of phases – primary/secondary/special /further/higher
3. Flexible and permeable age cohorts
4. School day, term and year
5. Flexible time schedules
6. Design of buildings and learning spaces
7. Competence-based, trans-disciplinary curriculum
8. Academic/pastoral division
9. Smaller units within schools
10. School and workplace

Role reconfigurations

11. Co-construction between stakeholders
12. Governance
13. Widespread, school-based innovation
14. Initial teacher training and continuing professional development
15. Partners as teachers

Leadership reconfigurations

16. Flatter, less hierarchical staff structures
17. Distributed leadership
18. Student leadership
19. Leadership development and succession
20. Decision-making methods



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